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The news—briefly

US blamed in S. Africa arms flow

Washington

After a two-year staff investigation, a congressional subcommittee has accused American officials of failing to follow the US arms embargo against South Africa.

Monitor correspondent Daniel Southerland reports investigators found that the Space Research Corporation of Vermont and its financier, the First Pennsylvania Bank, were able to ship to South Africa from 1976 to '78 artillery shells, 155-mm guns, technology, and other military equipment, because:

— The State Department's Office of Munitions Control misapplied its own regulations.

— A CIA agent may have helped South African officials bypass the embargo.

— Lax US Army procedures allowed Space Research to use Army facilities to help produce artillery shells for South Africa.

The results of the congressional inquiry came even as the Reagan administration was easing restrictions on nonmilitary exports to the South African military and police. The administration has approved several high-technology computer sales which had been delayed because of concern that they might violate the arms embargo.

Investigators said the discoveries pointed to weaknesses in the entire structure of enforcement procedures. Rep. Howard E. Wolpe (D) of Michigan, chairman of the House subcommittee on Africa, who introduced the staff report on the activities of the Space Research Corporation, said the administration's recent moves "underline the increasing need to indicate our disassociation from apartheid by strict enforcement of the US and UN arms embargoes against South Africa."

The report recommends establishment of a new State Department office to follow through on export restrictions; increased staff for the Office of Munitions Control; and investigations by the Senate and House Intelligence Committees of the CIA's role in attempts to evade the arms embargo.